



PLUTUS ACADEMY

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World Bank Signs \$500 Million Project With Government of India



Context:

The Government of India and the World Bank today signed a \$500 million project to build safe and green national highway corridors in the states of Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh.

Government's Vision:

- The Government of India is committed to environmentally sustainable development in its infrastructure projects.
- The ultimate objective of transport infrastructure is to provide seamless connectivity and reduce logistics costs.
- The Government of India has launched many investment programs in road sector infrastructure to strengthen and improve logistics performance.
- It is imperative that the infrastructure investments are climate resilient.

- \$500 million loan from the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD), has a maturity of 18.5 years including a grace period of five years.

About the Project:

- The selected stretches in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh will help improve connectivity and promote economic development.
- The National Highways of India carry about 40 percent of road traffic. However, several sections of these highways have inadequate capacity, weak drainage structures and black spots prone to accidents. This project will set new standards in the construction of safe motorable roads.
- The project will support the ministry with an in-depth analysis of gender-related issues in the transport sector along with help in creating jobs for women by training women-led micro enterprises and women collectives to implement green technologies in the highway corridors.
- It will be implemented by the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways
- This project will also support analytics to map the freight volume and movement pattern on the National Highway network, identify constraints, and provide innovative logistics solutions.
- This project will provide efficient transportation for road users in the four states, connect people with markets and services, promote efficient use of construction materials and water to reduce the depletion of scarce natural resources, and help lower GHG emissions.
- The project will strengthen and widen existing structures; construct new pavements, drainage facilities and bypasses; improve junctions; and introduce road safety features.

‘Legion of Merit Award’ to Prime Minister Modi.



Context:

USA has awarded Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison with the prestigious Legion of Merit.

Legion of Merit:

The is a military award of the United States Armed Forces that is given for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services and achievements.

Instituted: 1942

Awarded for: Exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services and achievements.

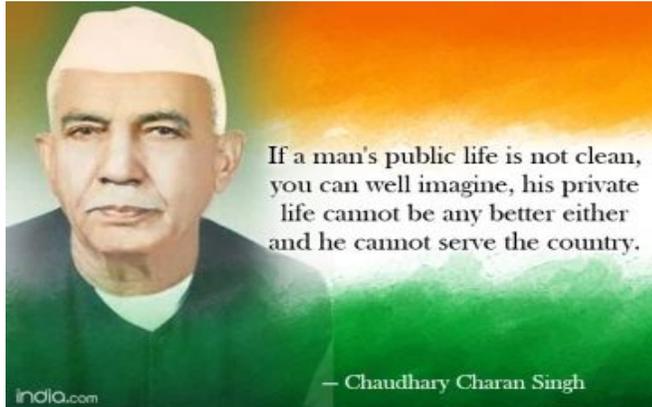
The US had last awarded Legion of Merit to late Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on September 18, 2020 as the senior most Royal in the Middle-East for bridging divides in the restive region.

IMPORTANT POINTS:

- US President Donald Trump has mainstreamed the QUAD by awarding its original architects Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison with the prestigious Legion of Merit.
- While the outgoing US president has awarded the Legion of Merit to Modi, Abe and Morrison for their leadership and vision, it can also be

interpreted as President Trump telling the world that it was during his time at the White House that these relationships were taken to a different level.

Kisan Diwas amid farmer's protests



Context:

- Protesting farmer unions who urged people on 'Kisan Diwas', the birth anniversary of former prime minister Chaudhary Charan Singh, in support of their issue.
- Every year Chaudhary Charan Singh's birthday is celebrated as Kisan Diwas.

Chaudhary Charan Singh served as the **5th Prime Minister of India** between 28 July 1979 and 14 January 1980.

Frequently he is referred as the '**champion of India's peasants**'.

Born: 23 December 1902, Hapur

Died: 29 May 1987, New Delhi

Party: Janata Party (Secular)

→ **The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has paid tributes to former Prime Minister, Shri Chaudhary Charan Singh, on his Jayanti.**

8 Khelo India State Centres of Excellence have been inaugurated.



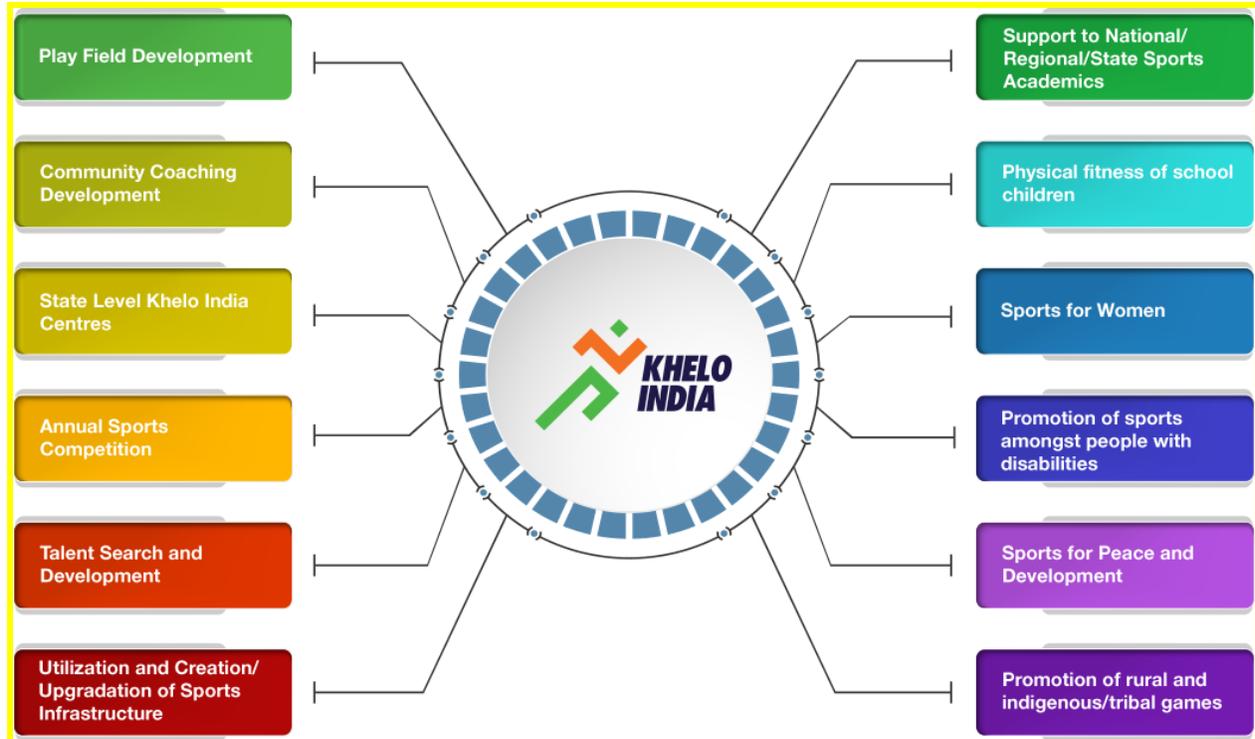
Context:

Union Minister of Sports & Youth Affairs Shri Kiren Rijju virtually inaugurated 8 Khelo India State Centres of Excellence (KISCEs) across India.

Eight states include Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Telangana, Manipur, Mizoram, Odisha, Karnataka and Kerala.

ABOUT Khelo India:

- **Khelo India** Programme is a national yojana/scheme for the development of sports in **India**.
- It was **launched** in the **year** 2018.
- Khelo India Youth Games, means Play India Youth Games, held annually in January or February, are the national level multidisciplinary grassroots games in India held for two categories, namely under-17 years school students and under-21 college students.



Recent development and Government's Approach:

- India's vision is to see India in top 10 in the Los Angeles Olympics 2028.
- The Khelo India State Centres of Excellence are being started in addition to the National Centres of Excellence.
- The Khelo India State Centres of Excellence will ensure that athletes proficient in a certain sport can be given the world-class specialised training and these centers become the best facilities in the country to train athletes in the priority sport for which they have been earmarked.
- The support to the centers will be in the form of infrastructure upgradation, setting up of sports science centres and also soft components in the form of quality coaches and sports science human resources like physiotherapists, strength & conditioning experts etc.
- The Centres will also have High performance Managers to ensure quality of sports science input and performance management.
- The setting up of the KISCE will also help to broad-base talent identification.

National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)



About NTCA:

- The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) is a **statutory body** under the **Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change**.

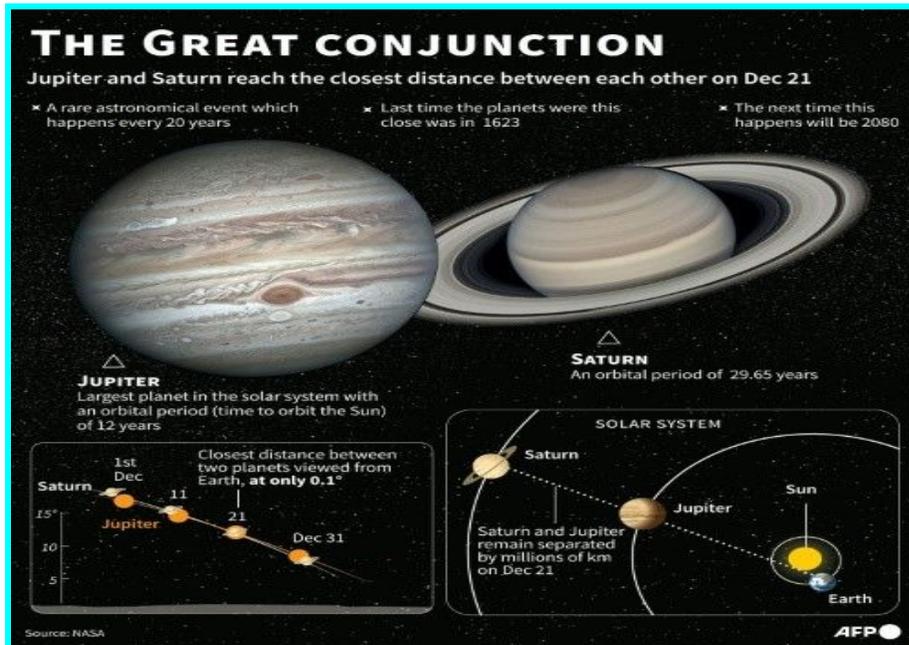
When was it established?

- It was **established in 2005** following the **recommendations of the Tiger Task Force**.

Statutory status:

- It was constituted under enabling provisions of the **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**, as amended in 2006, for strengthening tiger conservation, as per powers and functions assigned to it.

Jupiter Saturn Great Conjunction



Context:

- For the last several days, sky watchers have been captivated by the **Great Conjunction between Jupiter and Saturn**. The closest pass took place on Monday, December 21, but the spectacle itself began days earlier — and will last until at least Christmas Day.

What is a great conjunction?

- **A pairing between any pair of planets is a conjunction. Jupiter and Saturn are the two largest planets visible to the naked eye, hence the expression 'Great Conjunction'. These two align roughly every 20 years, which is relatively rare compared to the alignments of planets closer to the Sun (and which consequently have shorter orbits).**
- **Jupiter orbits the Sun once in 12 years, and Saturn once in 30.** High school arithmetic tells us that in **60 more years** (the LCM of 12 and 30), i.e. in 2080, the two planets will align at roughly the same

place where stargazers watched them on December 21, 2020. **In these 60 years, Jupiter will have orbited the Sun five times, while Saturn will have done so twice.**

- But they will have met twice more during this period, though at different places in the sky. In 12 years more, Jupiter will return to its current place; in the next 8 years, it will complete 2/3rds of another 12-year cycle around the Sun. In the same 20 years, Saturn will have completed 2/3rds of its 30-year cycle. In other words, the two planets will meet again in 2040. And yet again in 2060.

So, why is this conjunction special?

- It's the alignment. We measure the position of a planet in terms of the angle it makes on the Earth's orbital plane, with a given reference direction. When we say two planets have aligned in a conjunction, it suggests they are casting the same angle with that reference direction.
- In fact, this is almost never the case. Planets in a conjunction are typically above or below each other, because their orbits are slightly tilted with respect to each other.
- **This time, Jupiter and Saturn are a tenth of a degree apart viewed from Earth.** From some views, that might give them the appearance of converging into one, but viewers around the world have found them distinct enough to tell them apart.
- Also, the position of Earth matters. Not every alignment provides a clear viewing.

And how rare is this conjunction?

- The last Great Conjunction happened in 1623. For context, Galileo had discovered four of Jupiter's moons with his telescope a few years previously — but scientists today believe Galileo would not have found it easy to see the conjunction, because the planets were aligned too close to the Sun from Earth's perspective.

- From an Indian context, Jahangir was ruling the Mughal empire at the time, and the Maratha warrior king Chhatrapati Shivaji was yet to be born.
- The last time the two planets were close enough to be viewed in the night sky was in **1226. This was just a year before the death of the Mongol ruler Genghis Khan.**

How long will the spectacle continue?

- **Jupiter has been catching up with Saturn** since the beginning of December as the two planets move along their orbital paths around the Sun. **The date the world celebrated, the night of December 21, was when Jupiter “overtook” Saturn (from Earth’s perspective).**
- But even after December 21, the planets will still appear very close together for the next few days. Between December 16 and 25, the distance between the two planets in the sky will appear to a viewer from Earth to be less than the diameter of a full moon.
- This does not mean, of course, they are really that close — **they are currently over 700 million kilometres apart.** Yet their separation during the current conjunction is smaller than they usually ever get during most other conjunctions.